

Consolidation

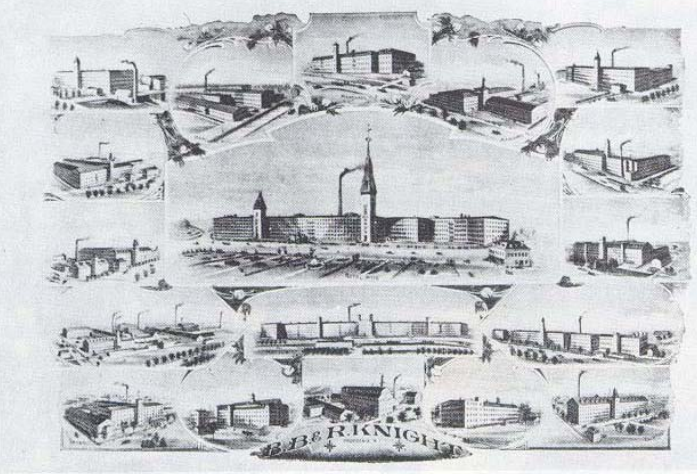
The Panic of 1893, caused by over-expansion and overproduction, resulted in several failures in Providence including the Oriental Mills on Admiral Street and the Armington and Sims Engine Company located in the old Monohasset Mill (530-532 Kinsley Avenue). In a sense that depression did for the consolidation movement what

the Panic of 1857 did for the incorporation movement. The stockholders of many manufacturing corporations preferred to be under the management of a large company, rather than the risks that a smaller independent venture involved.

Southern competition was also a major factor in the consolidation movement. Because of the considerable

investment placed in mills of the postwar period, small corporations often could not afford to scrap their equipment and adapt their structures for newer more efficient machinery and modern shops. This financial conservatism made competition with the blossoming southern textile industry difficult. In an effort to rebuild their economy, southern towns and states offered manufacturers a tax-free status and a work force willing to accept low wages.

MILLS ESTABLISHED BY B. B. & R. KNIGHT,
MANUFACTURERS OF
FRUIT OF THE LOOM,
ALSO,
FINE SHEETINGS AND SHIRTINGS,
TWEILLS, PRINT CLOTHS AND CAMBRICS.



ARCTIC MILL	ARCTIC, R. I.	LIPPITT MILL	PHENIX, R. I.
CLINTON MILL	WOONSOCKET, R. I.	MANCHAUG MILLS 1, 2 AND 3	MANCHAUG, R. I.
CRANSTON PRINT WORKS	CRANSTON, R. I.	NATICK MILLS	NATICK, R. I.
DODGEVILLE MILL	DODGEVILLE, MASS.	PONTIAC MILL	PONTIAC, R. I.
FISKEVILLE MILL	FISKEVILLE, R. I.	READVILLE MILL	READVILLE, MASS.
GRANT MILL	PROVIDENCE, R. I.	ROYAL MILL	RIVERPOINT, R. I.
HEHRON MILL	HEHRONVILLE, MASS.	VALLEY QUEEN MILL	RIVERPOINT, R. I.
JACKSON MILL	FISKEVILLE, R. I.	WHITE ROCK MILL	WESTERLY, R. I.

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Fig. 30: Illustration, July 1910.

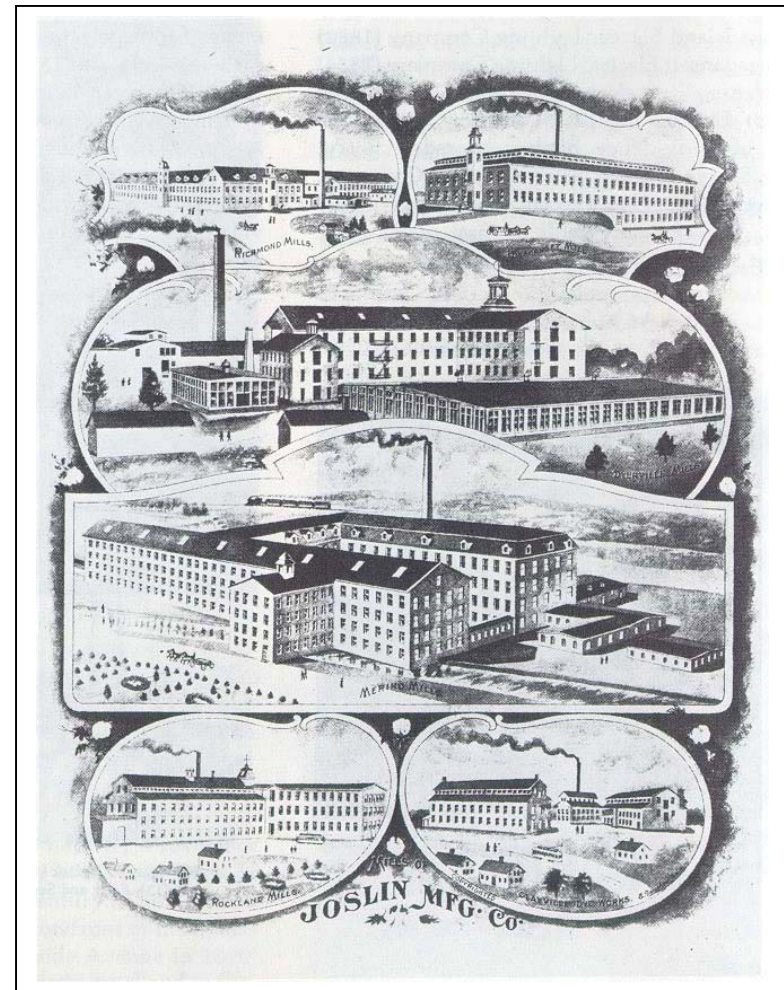


Fig. 31: Illustration, 1904. Courtesy of the [Rhode Island Historical Society](#); RHI X3 2977.

Besides these attractions, manufacturers saw potential savings in cotton- and coal-transportation costs. Moreover, companies locating in the South in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought the latest and most efficient technology.

One of the many manufacturing empires formed as a response to these forces was the fine-cotton-shirting-and-sheeting-manufacturing network of B.B. and R. Knight. This company, founded by Benjamin and Robert Knight in 1852, gained many of its mill properties by buying the holdings of the bankrupt Sprague empire after the Panic of 1873. By 1886, the Knight mills employed over 6,000 workers and produced cotton cloth known all over the world by its "Fruit of the Loom" label. Although the Grant Mill and later the Nottingham Mills were its only Providence mills, the Knight company undoubtedly supported Providence machinery and base-metal industries.

Another network of mills was formed by the U.S. Finishing Company which bought the Silver Spring Bleaching and Dyeing Company on Charles Street and the Queen Dyeing Company (formerly the Woonasquatucket Print Works) on Valley Street in 1909. This company also owned a large Pawtucket printing company and several other finishing, bleaching, dyeing, or printing companies in the United States. Another example, though on a smaller scale, was the Wanskuck Company which owned five Rhode Island worsted mills, three of which were located in Providence.

Diversification into braiding was yet another response to competition in the cotton-goods industry. Several operations, no longer able to compete in the cotton-cloth industry, were absorbed by the braiding industry. The braiding machine, manufactured in Providence by the Rhode Island Braiding Company as early as 1861 and later manufactured by the New England Butt Company, spurred the expansion of the braiding industry. The industrialization of shoe production and the consequent expanding market for shoelaces also aided in the growth of this industry, as did the expanding market for corset laces and decorative braid for clothing and uniforms.

Two cotton shoelace and braid corporations in Rhode Island, the Joslin Manufacturing Company and the International Braid Company, built a network of cotton braiding companies by buying struggling textile operations. The Joslin Manufacturing Company bought the Dyerville and Merino Mills, in Providence, as well as our other Rhode Island textile mills, for the manufacture of shoelaces and corset laces. The International Braid Company took over the Fletcher Manufacturing Company (already a braid manufacturer) and the Elmwood Mills in the early twentieth century.

The largest textile combine to form at this time, however, was the American Woolen Company, formed in 1899 by William Wood of Lawrence, Massachusetts, and Charles Fletcher of Providence, who owned the Providence and National Worsted Mills. The American Woolen Company bought several Lawrence worsted mills and in Providence acquired the Riverside, Valley, Weybosset, Manton, and Providence and National Wor-

sted Mills. By 1924, this combine owned sixty New England woolen and worsted mills.

The consolidation movement was by no means limited to the textile industry. Without actually forming monopolies, large industries could buy their major competitors and obtain virtually the same effect. Many companies went one step further by buying foreign factories (or building factories abroad), thereby avoiding tariffs.

Two such companies with plants in Providence were the Crompton and Knowles Loom Works, which took over the City Machine Company factory on Harris Avenue, and the International Power Company, which bought the Corliss Plant on West River Street and the Rhode Island Locomotive Work Complex on Hemlock Street. International Power bought these plants with the intent of continuing to produce the goods manufactured at each factory. With the many varied companies it bought, International Power was one of the early conglomerates.

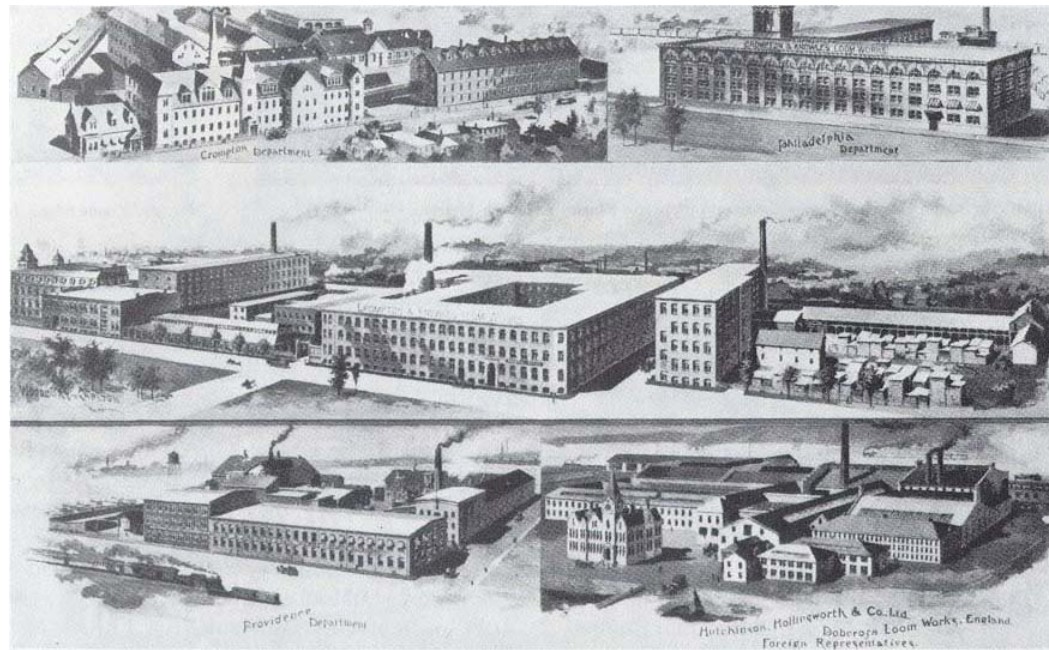


Fig. 32: Crompton and Knowles Loom Works; Harris Avenue; illustration, 1908.

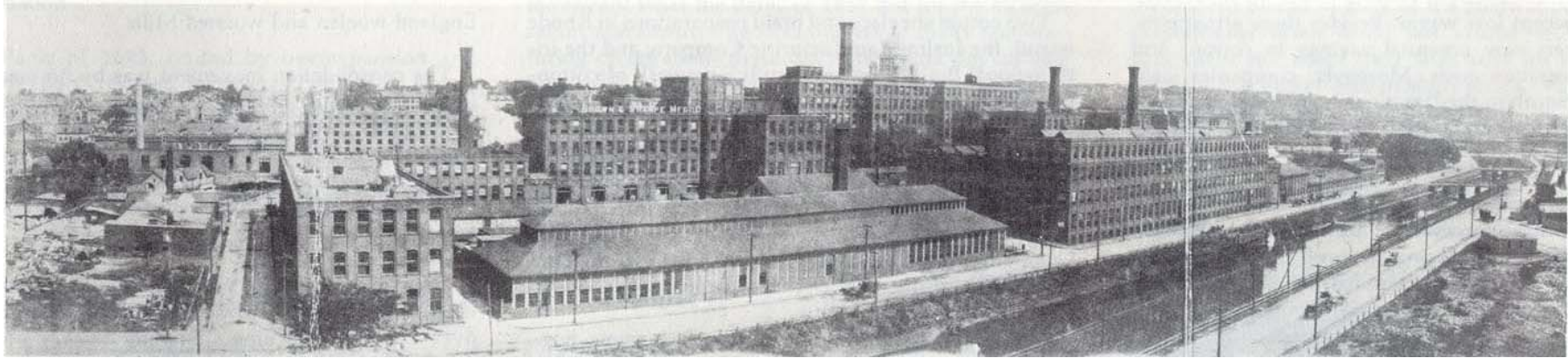


Fig. 33: Brown and Sharpe Manufacturing Company; Promenade Street. This was the largest complex along the east end of the Woonasquatucket River; photograph c. 1910. Courtesy of the [Rhode Island Historical Society](#); RHi X3 2979.

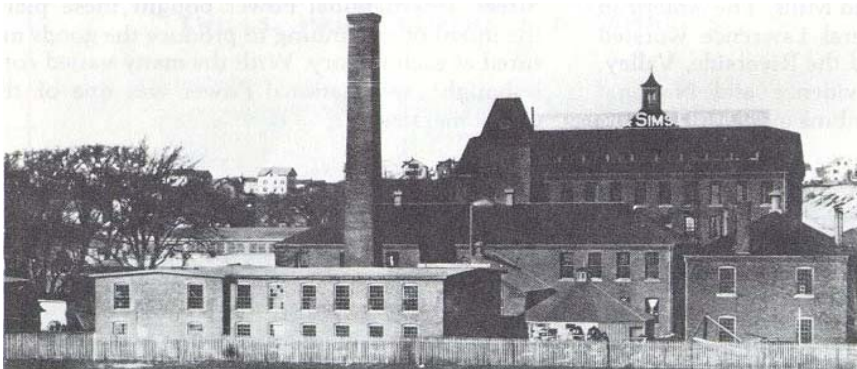


Fig. 34: Armington and Sims Engine Company, (c. 1890); Kinsley and Eagle Streets. Courtesy of the [Rhode Island Historical Society](#); RHi X3 2859.



Fig. 35: Rhode Island Tool Co., formerly Providence Tool Co., West River Street; illustration, 1904.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY INDUSTRIAL PROVIDENCE: 1909-1939

During the early twentieth century, patterns established in the late nineteenth century continued. The city and state made improvements to the Providence harbor, the sewage-treatment and disposal system, and the water-supply system (the construction of the Scituate Reservoir). Labor activism which continued to gain in strength and organization culminated in the strike years of 1902, 1913, and 1922, although the growing antilabor sentiment of the 1920s decreased the labor unions' effectiveness. The textile and textile-machine industries tem-

porarily prospered during World War 1, foundered during the postwar recession, and nearly ceased production during the Great Depression.

By the first decade of the twentieth century, industrial structures appeared in almost every Providence neighborhood. Although new construction continued later in the century, the industrial landscape was nearly complete. Some parts of Providence had concentrations of one type of industry, such as the worsted district of the Woonasquatucket River corridor or the jewelry district south of the business district. Other areas, such as parts of South Providence or the Point Street Harbor neighbor-

hood, while predominantly industrial, retained a more diverse composition of manufacturers. A few sections of Providence had only small pockets of industry.

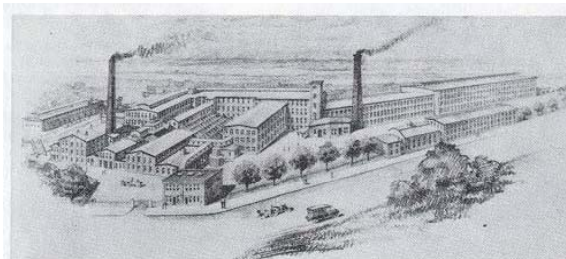
The east end of the Woonasquatucket River corridor contained the large plants of the William A. Harris Steam Engine Company (Park Street; now demolished), the Brown and Sharpe Manufacturing Company (Promenade at Holden Street), the Nicholson File Company (Acorn Street), the American Locomotive Works (Valley Street; now demolished), and Crompton and Knowles Loom Works (Harris Avenue). This area also contained the Merchants Cold Storage Warehouse and several small diverse industries, such as lumber and planing mills, stone-working operations, and small base-metal companies.

Adjacent to this diverse industrial area was the textile district containing four worsted mill complexes owned by the American Woolen Company; the large complex of the Atlantic Mills (Manton Avenue), the dyeing and finishing plants of the Queen Dyeing Company, formerly the Woonasquatucket Print Works (Valley Street); and the Providence Dyeing, Bleaching and Calendering Company (Valley Street). Although dominated by these mills, this district also contained smaller textile mills, base-metal operations, a rubber company, and a brewery.

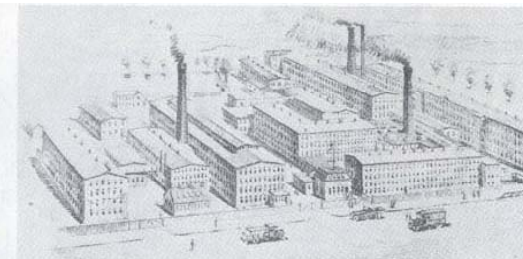
In the western section of the Woonasquatucket River corridor were the Joslin Manufacturing Company's braiding mills: the Dyerville Mill (Manton Avenue) and the Merino Mills (Ponagansett Avenue).

The southern terminus of the Moshassuck River was another concentrated industrial area dominated by the large mill complexes of the American Screw Company (North Main and Hewes Streets), the Franklin Machine Company (Charles Street; now demolished), and the Fletcher Manufacturing Company (47 Charles Street). The only small industrial concern was the Stillman White Brass Foundry (Bark Street). Further northwest on the Moshassuck was the large complex (formerly the Allen Printworks) occupied by the Roger Williams Finishing Company (Dryden Lane).

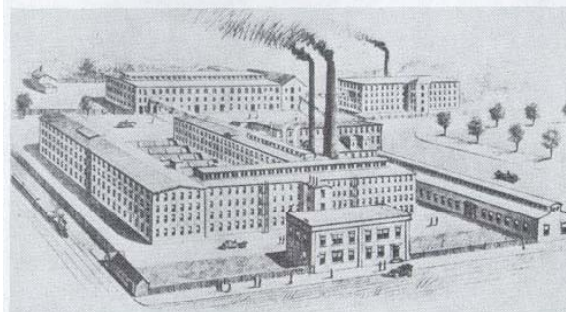
Several factories were located next to or near the West River. The J. P. Campbell Company, a cotton-goods manufacturer, occupied the former Oriental Mills (Admiral Street). The International Power Company, diesel- and steam-engine manufacturers, occupied the former Corliss Steam Engine Works (West River Street) adjacent to which was the Rhode Island Tool Company factory. Next to the West River was the large Silver Spring Bleaching and Dyeing Company complex. These factories were bordered by a residential neighborhood characterized by modest one- and two-family houses and triple-decker tenements.



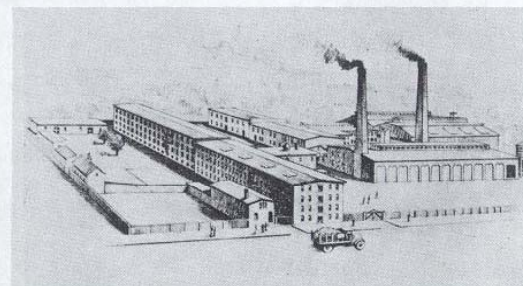
(a) Valley Mills, Eagle Street



(b) National and Providence Worsted Mills, Valley Street.



(c) Weybosset Mills, Dike Street.



(d) Riverside Mills, Aleppo Street.

Fig. 36: Four Providence Worsted Mills owned by the American Woolen Company; illustration, c. 1918. All are in the Olneyville textile district.



Fig. 37: Silver Spring Bleaching and Dyeing Company (1869 and later); Charles Street.

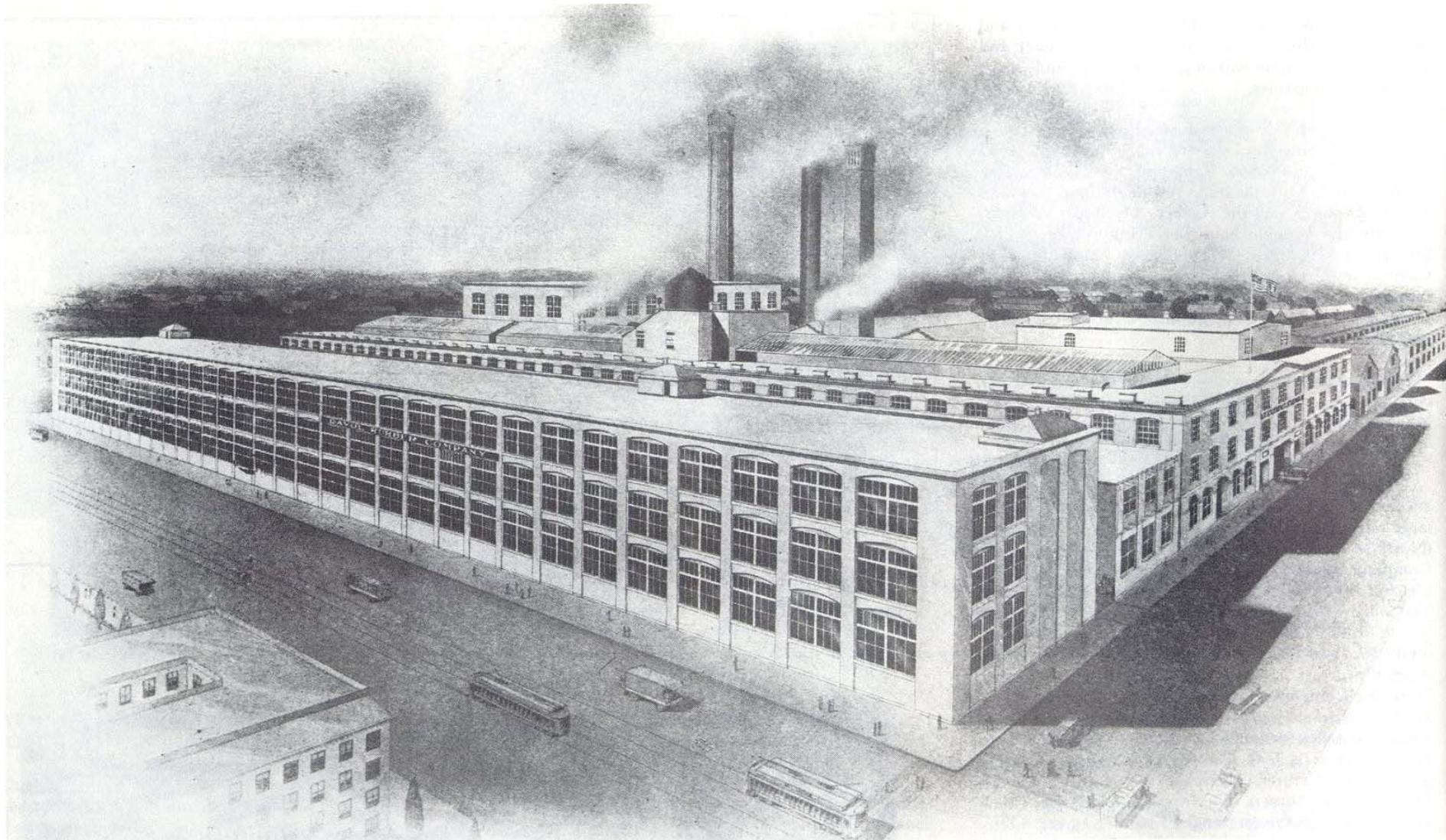


Fig. 38: Davol Rubber Company (1880, c. 1884, and later); Point Street. By the early 20th century the company had built numerous additions to its 1880 plant. Today this complex is under conversion to commercial condominiums utilizing tax incentives stimulated by the Tax Reform Act of 1976 for rehabilitation of historic properties. This innovative project, to be known as Davol Square, under direction of Robert Freeman, Marathon Development Corporation, and Beckman, Blydenburgh & Associates, architects, will open in the fall of 1982.

Further northwest on the West River was Wanskuck Village, which contained the Wanskuck Mill (725 Branch Avenue), workers' housing (on numerous side

streets off Branch Avenue), the Steere Mill (Wild Street), and the Geneva Mills (Douglas Avenue, on both sides of the city line).

South of the Central Business District the jewelry district continued to expand with the construction multi-storied jewelry factories (divided into numerous rental units) which were built by jewelry companies or real-estate investors in the early twentieth century.



Fig. 39: Irons and Russell Building (1903); 95 Chestnut Street; illustration, 1903; Martin & Hall Architects. The Irons and Russell Building, a jewelry manufactory, was built on the site of the Home for Aged Men. Courtesy of the [Rhode Island Historical Society](#); RHi X3 2847.

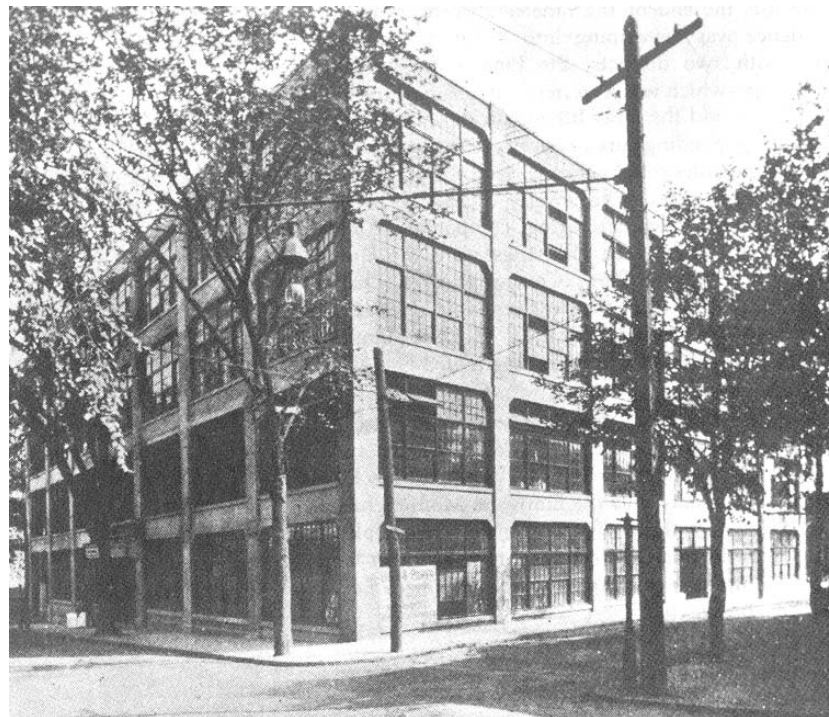


Fig. 40: A. T. Wall Building (1910); illustration, 1910. Monks & Johnson, architects. Built for jewelry manufacturing, the A. T. Wall Building is the first Rhode Island example of C.A.P. Turner's flat-slab, mushroom-column type of reinforced-concrete construction. In 1912 the Doran Company built a jewelry-manufacturing building (Ship Street) using the same type of construction.

The Irons and Russell Building (95 Chestnut Street); the Ostby and Barton Building (118 Richmond Street, recently demolished for the State Courthouse), and the Doran Building (150 Chestnut Street) were major jewelry-manufacturing buildings constructed in the first decade of the twentieth century. Interspersed among these large impressive masonry structures were the reinforced-concrete factories built by the Doran Company and the A. T. Wall Company. This innovative type of factory construction continued to be used for later

factories such as the Nemo Building (222 Richmond Street) and the Coro Building (167 Point Street).

The major development in the Point Street-Harbor industrial district occurred with the construction of the Rhode Island Company electric-generating plant (Manchester Street) and the enlargement of the Narragansett Electric Lighting Company's plant (Eddy Street) as well as with the plant expansions of the Davol Rubber Company (Point Street) and the Vesta Knitting

Mills factory (Imperial Place). The harbor underwent a major change when the Providence Gas Company left their Globe Street plant for a large new plant at Sassafras Point. The abandoned gas-company plant was taken over by the Burrows and Kenyon Lumber Company. A new addition to this area was the plant of the Almy Water Tube Boiler Company built in the 1890s at 184 Allens Avenue.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, South Providence was developing into a diverse industrial center with two districts: the Pine and Friendship Streets area—which was a western extension of the jewelry district—and the Eddy Street corridor. These areas housed an expanding core of jewelry manufacturers (as jewelry companies sought cheaper land with more room for expansion outside the jewelry district) as well as numerous other manufacturing companies. Among major South Providence industries were the United States Gutta Percha Paint Company (8-12 Dudley Street), the American Screw Company (Henderson Street; since demolished), and the E. M. Dart Manufacturing Company (134 Thurbers Avenue).

To the west of South Providence the Elmwood and West End neighborhoods were also mixed-use areas. Plants in this area included the works of the New England Butt Company and the Elmwood Manufacturing Company, two of the area's oldest industrial complexes dating from the mid-nineteenth century. Another large factory complex was that of the Mechanical Fabric Company on Dexter Street.

In the southern section of Elmwood were the impressive complexes built by the Gorham Manufacturing Company (Adelaide Avenue) in 1890 and the modest engraving factory of John Hope and Sons Company (Mashpaug Street) at Mashpaug Pond. A large complex (since demolished) at Mashpaug Pond was built by the American Enamel Company, an important paint manufacturer.

The South Main, Wickenden, and India Street area of Fox Point continued to be an important industrial area with some of the city's oldest factories. The Household Sewing Machine Company, formerly part of the Providence Tool Company, still occupied its Wickenden Street factory (since demolished), while nearby the Providence Engineering Works (formerly the Providence Steam Engine Company) had just completed a remodeling and enlargement of their South Main Street factory. Nearby, at Pike and South Main Streets, the Fuller Iron Works had also expanded its plant with the construction of the city's first steel-framed, glass-walled machine shop in 1893.



Fig. 41: American Electrical Works; Stewart Street; photograph, c. 1890. Courtesy of the [Rhode Island Historical Society](#); RHi X3 2860.



Fig. 42: Oakdale Mfg. Co. South Water Street; drawing, 1901. Courtesy of the [Rhode Island Historical Society](#); RHi X3 2837.

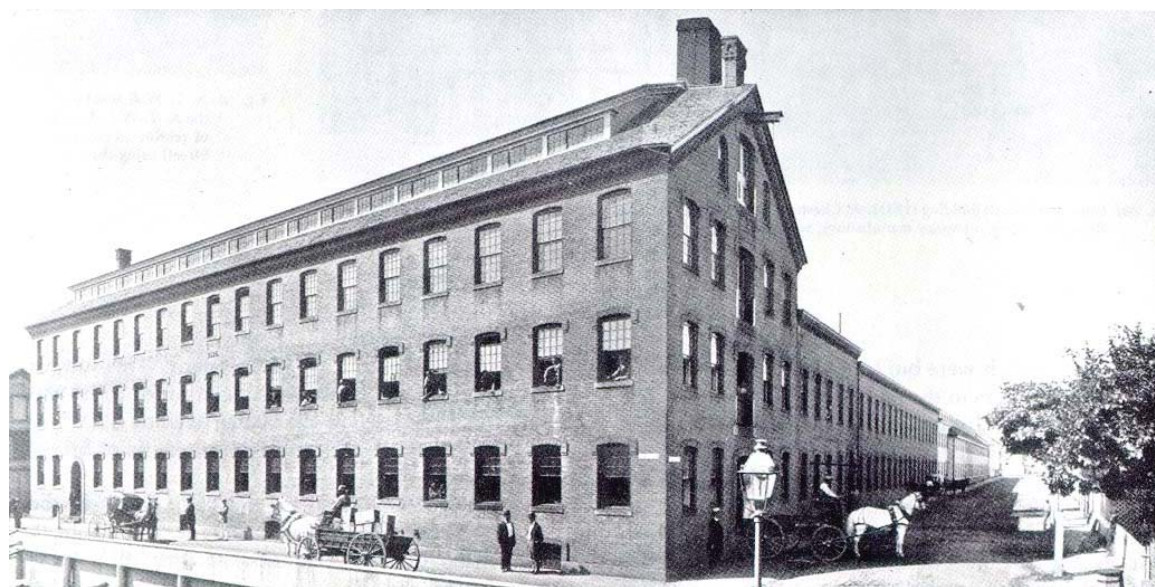


Fig. 43: New England Butt Company, (c. 1890); Pearl Street. Founded in 1842, this was one of the area's oldest manufacturing firms.



Fig. 44: Turn-of-the-century view of the Providence Engineering Works (demolished); South Main Street; photograph, 1901. In the background is an old gasometer from the gas company's Pike Street plant. Courtesy of the [Rhode Island Historical Society](#); RHi X3 2834.

The Union Oil Company, a cotton-seed-oil manufacturer, also remained at its Tockwotton Street factory (demolished), and the Hicks Boiler Works, still a small operation, continued to occupy its South Main Street factory.

The area north of Fox Point—South Main Street, North Main Street, and Canal Street—once the site of major industries, was commercial with the exception of the Oakdale Manufacturing Company Works (120 South Water Street). Warehouses of companies such as the

Rumford Chemical Works (239 South Main Street) of Rumford, Rhode Island, were located on these streets, conveniently near harbor and railroads.



Fig. 45: Skilled workers manufacturing jewelry; stereograph c. 1915. Courtesy of the [Rhode Island Historical Society](#); RHi X3 180.

Expansion and Diversification in the Jewelry Industry

In contrast to the declining textile industry the Providence jewelry industry was able to expand and diversify. Because of the less complex nature of machinery in the jewelry industry and the typical small capital investment in and personal ownership of jewelry companies, many new experimental companies continued to form. Though not all were successful, many made significant contributions in new products, processes, and machinery.

Many products manufactured in the early twentieth century represented an imaginative, entrepreneurial response by jewelry manufacturers to changing social customs and tastes. One such product was the cigarette lighter which became popular with the increasing number of both men and women smokers (between 191 and 1928 the total production of cigarettes in the United States more than doubled). The Spiedel Manufacturing Company (70 Ship Street) was one of the first to manufacture the metal watchband (soon more popular than the watch chain). The George F. Berkander Company (891 Broad Street) introduced celluloid jewelry, buttons, and hair ornaments during the 1920s.

As long as the jewelry industry was prospering, findings were in demand regardless of changing fashions thus, this segment of the industry was less volatile than the manufacture of novelty items or costume jewelry.

The Decline of the Textile and Textile-Machine Industries

By the early twentieth century, Rhode Island textile and textile-machine manufacturers were struggling to recover from frequent panics and recessions, as well as from southern competition. A major failure during the recession of 1903 was the J. P. Campbell Company which occupied the former Oriental Mill (Admiral Street). The plant of this bankrupt fine-shirting-and sheeting company, however, was bought by the American Silk Spinning Company which actually expanded the factory and work force.

The decline of the New England cotton market caused numerous textile-machine companies to close or consolidate. In Providence the Phenix Iron Foundry (Elm Street) closed its plant during the 1903 recession. The Providence Machine Company (Allens Avenue) sold out to the Whitin Machine Company which moved the operation to its main plant in Massachusetts.

Other branches of the base-metal industries which directly or indirectly supported the textile industry were often able to diversify into products for which there was a growing market. For example, the Providence Engineering Works (521 South Main Street), which had formerly manufactured steam engines, began the manufacture of engines and running gear for the Maxwell Briscoe Motor Car.

The First World War temporarily aided textile businesses in Providence, though profits realized during the war were often lost in the postwar recession. The Atlantic Mills and the U.S. Finishing Company gained government contracts to produce khaki cloth (as did many southern mills), and the five American Woolen Company mills in Providence manufactured woolen and worsted goods for government use.

Base-metal companies such as Brown and Sharpe also garnered a number of weapon-related government contracts during the war. While such companies easily adjusted to a peace-time economy because their products had such a wide range of uses, textile manufacturers were less resilient. Southern mills, well established by the war's end, provided even tougher competition for New England mills. Moreover, women's fashions, requiring much less cloth, further constricted the market for textile goods.

Another problem was the introduction of synthetic fabrics. Many mills, struggling to survive at this point, could not afford to make the investment in synthetics, while other companies did not have the foresight to make the transition.

With growing competition from the South with its cheap labor, sophisticated machinery, lower transportation costs, and—in many cases—northern capital, the New England textile industry continued to deteriorate.

The bankruptcy of B. B. & R. Knight in 1924 as well as the abandonment by the American Woolen Company of two Providence mills in 1928 dramatized this decay in Providence.

"I never knew that before!"

Many a woman learned from her mother, who had learned it from her mother, that Fruit of the Loom can always be relied upon. They use it as a matter of course for making things that must look well and wash well and wear well.

Yet there are many women who are surprised to find that nowadays they can buy Fruit of the Loom in colors and ready-made, and by the yard. The colors are fast and so beautiful and clear that a whole range of new uses for this household friend will instantly suggest themselves to you.

You can get a number of garments all ready-made of colored as well as white Fruit of the Loom. Pajamas, nightshirts, nightgowns, men's shirts, boys' shirts and blouses, aprons and other articles are now on sale at leading stores.

Fruit of the Loom

Whether you are seeking Fruit of the Loom in white or colors, by the yard or in ready-made articles, remember that you can always tell the genuine by the label.

B. B. & R. KNIGHT, Inc.
 Makers of
 Alpaca Knit, Hosiery, Cotton and Other Fine Cotton Fabrics
 Crompton & Company, Selling Agents
 86 W. 4th St., New York

Fig. 46: Advertisement (1922); B. B. & R. Knight, Inc.



Fig. 47: California Artificial Flower Co. (1939); 400 Reservoir Avenue. One of the few Art-Deco industrial buildings of the era.

The Great Depression

The panic of 1929 and the subsequent disastrous depression further exacerbated the decay of Providence's industrial economic base. Between 1929 and 1931 unemployment in Providence was 40 per cent in the textile industry, 47 per cent in the jewelry industry, and 38 per cent in the base-metal industry.

The Crompton and Knowles Loom Works abandoned its Kinsley Avenue plant, the U.S. Finishing Company sold its Silver Spring Factory, the American Woolen Company sold four of its five Providence mills, and several smaller companies (like the Barstow Stove Company and the John Hope and Sons Company) were forced to close their factories.

Mass unemployment resulted in harder working conditions for those who were employed. Many mill owners tried to save money by instituting the practices of "stretch-outs"—longer working hours—or "speedups"—increasing the rate of production. Wage cuts ranged from

between 10 and 50 per cent. Such measures sparked the Great Textile Strike of 1934, which was an effort to unionize the northern and southern textile industries. During the latter half of the 1930s, workers gained considerable victories with federal and state legislation which protected the formation of unions, shortened the workday, instituted a minimum wage, created old-age pensions, prohibited strike injunctions, and created the Department of Employment Security and Compensation.

Unlike some Rhode Island towns which were left virtually abandoned when the textile mills closed, Providence still had a diverse (though less than stable), industrially based economy. Two large plants, in fact, were built in the 1930s—the Congdon and Carpenter Warehouse on Promenade Street and the factory of the California Artificial Flower Company (Cal-Art, 400 Reservoir Avenue). These large plants provided employment for several hundred additional workers.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY INDUSTRIAL PROVIDENCE: 1939-1980

World War II

Production activity occasioned by World War II aided economic recovery after the Depression. The Atlantic and Wanskuck Mills, having survived the Depression, were threatened by the decreasing market for worsted goods but were given a temporary reprieve when government contracts boosted production. Among nineteenth-century companies, both Brown & Sharpe and the U.S. Rubber Company (which manufactured thirty-six million rubber heels during the war) realized large profits from wartime contracts, but the greater number of concerns to benefit from the wartime production were twentieth-century companies which were less likely to suffer the problems of old machinery, a less marketable product, conservative stockholders, and—in some cases—second- or third generation family management. Among businesses formed in the twentieth century the Imperial Knife Company (1916), the American Silk Spinning Company (1908), and the Atlantic Rayon Company (1928) gained large profits from government contracts.

The Imperial Knife Company, formed in 1916 by Felix and Michael Mirando and managed by Domenic Fazzano, manufactured trench knives and pocket knives during the war. This firm was significant in its Italian-immigrant ownership and in its growth into a nationally known enterprise which is still in operation.

The American Silk Spinning Company and the Atlantic Rayon Company were two Providence firms which had begun the manufacture of synthetic fabrics in the 1920s. During the war the American Silk Spinning Company manufactured rayon tops for jungle boots, and the Atlantic Rayon Company (founded by Royal Little in 1928) gained large profits during the war by manufacturing rayon parachutes.

After the war Little formed the Textron Corporation, one of the country's first conglomerates. Little began by buying failing New England textile mills with the intention of operating them at a loss to provide enough of a tax break to allow expansion into other, more profitable industries.

The Textron Corporation had an enormous effect on industry in Rhode Island and other states, both in the company's liquidation of New England textile holdings and in its investments into other industries. Among the many companies owned by Textron today are the Spiedel Company (70 Ship Street), a watchband manufacturer, and the Gorham Manufacturing Company (Adelaide Avenue).

One other major wartime industry began with the construction of the shipyard in 1944 which was operated by the Rheem Ship Building Company. This shipyard built thirty-two Liberty ships during the war. After the war the site became part of the Harborside Industrial Park.

Postwar Era: Urban Decay and Urban Renewal

The 1950s marked a period of decay in Providence. The postwar recession eliminated the city's last large textile companies; the Wanskuck Company, the A. D. Juliard Company (the Atlantic Mills), and the American Silk Spinning Company were forced to cease operations because of large losses or to sell out to other companies which abandoned the failing textile operations for more profitable industries. The worsted industry suffered heavy losses as synthetics overtook the market-even for fine dress goods. Other large industries abandoned their Providence factories for new suburban plants. In 1949, the American Screw Company moved to Willimantic, Connecticut, and, in 1959, the Nicholson File Company moved its manufacturing operation to Indiana and its

Year	State of Rhode Island	City of Providence	City as Percent of State
1900	428,556	175,597	41
1910	542,810	224,328	41
1920	604,397	237,586	39
1930	687,697	292,981	37
1940	713,346	293,504	36
1950	791,896	348,674	31
1960	855,488	317,498	28

Source: United States Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Population: 1960. Number of Inhabitants, Rhode Island (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961) Table B.

Fig. 48: Chart; Community Renewal Program, 1964.



Fig. 49: U.S. Post Office, West River Park; photograph, December, 1970.

offices to East Providence. In 1964, the Brown & Sharpe Manufacturing Company moved to North Kingstown.

The population of Providence which had grown slowly from 237,000 in 1920 to 257,000 in 1949 (due partially to restrictive immigration laws passed in the 1920s) actually declined to 207,498 in 1960. The 16.6 per cent decline between 1950 and 1960 was the second largest drop in population of any American city during that decade. By 1970, the population had dropped to 179,116, a still significant 13.7 per cent decline. The Federal Urban Renewal Program, administered in Providence by the Providence Redevelopment Agency (PRA), was an attempt to reverse the economic decline of American cities. The basic premise of the program was that replac-

improving automobile access would attract new industries, businesses, and residents.

The first large industrial-redevelopment project in Providence was the construction of the West River Industrial Park (1956-1960). The seventy-acre park replaced a large section of the mixed-use, residential, and industrial North-end neighborhood with vacant land (with the exception of the base-metal works at 146 and 148 West River Street). This land was available to light manufacturing or commercial businesses for the construction of new factories and warehouses. The park now contains several one-story manufacturing or warehouse structures as well as the automated Post Office.

Two other major industrial-redevelopment projects were completed by the PRA. In the Point Street neighborhood, fifty-three houses were demolished to provide parking lots for existing industries such as the Imperial Knife Company (Imperial Place) and the Coro Company (167 Point Street).

The construction of the Huntington Industrial Park was the largest industrial redevelopment project in Providence. This project called for the demolition of 567 structures to clear a 117-acre site for the construction of large manufacturing plants. In addition to these projects, the construction of new highways and expressways was intended to aid the city's economic growth.

The result of these projects, however, was the large scale clearance of areas which, in some cases, were only partially redeveloped. Moreover, highways which cut through the city's neighborhoods created isolated pockets of residential and commercial structures, thus accelerating the decline of these areas.

By the 1960s, it was clear to some people that available vacant land and improved automobile access were only two factors necessary for the city's economic growth. Several plans for alternative development projects stressed the conservation of Providence's built and natural environment as a major factor in revitalizing the city.

The first such plan, presented in the College Hill Planning Study (1959), eventually resulted in the restoration of historic houses in the College Hill section of the

East Side. In 1970, architect William Warner presented a plan for the re-use of the huge American Screw Company complex and other industrial buildings in Randall Square for garden apartments, artists' studios, and commercial use—as well as the construction of new office and residential structures. While the final outcome of this plan was the adaptive re-use of two of the American Screw Company buildings and the Stillman White Brass Foundry as well as the large-scale construction of residential and commercial structures, this development was significant as the first re-use of industrial buildings in Providence in the context of an economic-development project.

In the 1970s, several industrial buildings including the Brown & Sharpe Complex (Promenade Street), the Fletcher Building (47 Charles Street), and the Hanley Building (52-62 Pine Street) were adapted for office, retail, or light-manufacturing space. An important rehabilitation project, completed in 1979, was the conversion of the Champlin-Hedison Building (116 Chestnut Street), a vacant jewelry factory, into ten condominium lofts. Besides providing a creative new use for an unused but structurally sound industrial building, this rehabilitation (by Beckman, Blydenburg and Associates) has aided in

the rehabilitation of downtown Providence by providing in town residential space.

While economic-development projects concentrating on commercial growth (such as the adaptive re-use of industrial buildings) gained widespread acceptance in the 1970s, industrial revitalization received less attention in Providence after the completion of the West River and Huntington Industrial Parks. Recently, however, city agencies and private business organizations have demonstrated a renewed interest in stabilizing the city's industrial base. The Providence Office of Economic Development and the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce have been instrumental in developing programs to aid the city's manufacturing companies which employ almost a third of the city's workers. In providing informational services and structuring financial-assistance programs for acquiring, rehabilitating, or expanding factories, as well as identifying available sites for new construction, the public and private sector will play a major role in stabilizing and possibly expanding the city's industrial base.



Fig. 50: View of the 60-acre West River Industrial Park, undertaken in 1956; photograph, 1964.